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SADC Perspectives on the European Union's Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)

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Abstract

The European Union (EU) is a major sponsor of African regional organisations (AROs) integration and peace and security programmes. Analysts generally agree that this relationship is defined by power asymmetries and is characterised by a distribution of resources and capabilities across issue areas that mostly favour the EU. However, most research focuses on EU policy preferences, portraying AROs as passive recipients of external assistance with limited scope to negotiate more favourable terms. On the other hand, official narratives downplay the complexities and politicisation of financial negotiation procedures, as well as the negative perceptions and concerns of recipient organisations. This highlights the need to conduct focused research about how AROs perceive and negotiate important EU agreements. In this paper, I focus on the perspectives of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on the EU's new funding instrument for external cooperation, the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), adopted in 2021. I draw attention to SADC's efforts to develop a common position on this instrument, highlighting the complexities that can arise when bilateral and regional financing arrangements are negotiated concurrently. However, I argue that for the EU to support efforts towards a more equitable partnership, as initially envisaged under its new development cooperation arrangements, these concerns matter, and should be carefully considered.

Keywords

Africa, European Union, regional integration, bilateral accord, asymmetries, geopolitical, marginalisation

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1. Introduction

The European Union's relations with African countries and the regional organisations they belong to have been primarily shaped by European colonisation (Omolo 2019, Mattheis et al 2023). More contemporary and institutionalised relations have been instituted through various cooperation and partnership agreements as well as financial instruments. Inter alia, the EU has been an important and long-term donor to the Southern African Development Community (SADC). This enduring partnership has been governed by the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, signed in June 2000 in Cotonou, Benin, by 28 EU member states and 79 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Group of States (ACP Group of States) or their formal configuration, the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) (Partnership Agreement 2000). It has mainly been financed by the European Development Fund (EDF), spanning various cycles, most recently the 11th EDF (2014-20). The EDF is the EU's oldest tool for development cooperation. It was launched in 1959, after the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, which established its legal framework (D'Alfonso 2014: 4). The EDF manages multi-year Regional Indicative Programmes (RIP), mostly involving regional organisations, and SADC has been a consistent recipient of these funds for almost three decades (Mattheis 2019: 103-4).

The Cotonou Partnership Agreement expired in February 2020, and the 11th EDF cycle elapsed in December 2020. In September 2019, the EU commissioned negotiations for a Post-Cotonou Partnership Agreement, pending the finalisation of a new agreement. A post-2020 programming process for the period 2021 to 2027 also started in November 2020. These culminated in the signature of the Post-Cotonou Agreement that establishes a comprehensive legal and policy foundation for future relations between the EU and African members of the ACP. The agreement also contains an Africa Protocol that regulates future interactions between the African Union (AU) and the EU, as well as the EU and AROs. The Post-Cotonou accord is currently implemented using a new EU financing tool called the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), which has since absorbed the EDF. The NDICI was adopted by the European Parliament in June 2021.[1]

The Post-Cotonou Agreement is a bilateral accord. Therefore, SADC member states signed it individually, rather than as a regional collection of states. However, the changes introduced by its funding instrument, the NDICI, have ramifications for AROs, SADC included. They relate to how they are funded, the policy and governance frameworks proposed, and the stakeholders that are involved in implementing EU-funded regional projects.

In contrast, the EU's shift to the NDICI was intended to give the EU a more adaptable and more straightforward financial tool for its foreign policy. It consolidated several of its prior external finance mechanisms into one and integrated the EDF, an instrument outside the EU's budget (EC 2021). It was also envisaged as a means of helping the EU to redefine and revitalise its external relations and international development cooperation, thereby transcending the conventional donor–recipient relationship shaped by colonial legacies. This has formed part of the EU's vision to develop a new comprehensive strategy for Africa which should create a partnership of equals and mutual interest' (Von der Leyen 2019: 4). Moreover, the EU has promised 'deeper strategic engagement' with its partner countries, 'forging stronger trust and collaboration' (EEAS 2021) under these new arrangements.

However, in Africa, the history of colonialism and economic exploitation has traditionally positioned the EU as a dominant actor in negotiations, and the AU and its African partners may not share the same vision of what a revitalised post-colonial partnership should look like. The EU's economic and political power considerably outweighs Africa's. According to scholars and some African policy-makers, its priorities have dominated important accords, such as the Cotonou Agreement, since they are negotiated in the context of asymmetrical power relations between itself and African countries and their organisations (Hurt 2020: 152-4; Carbone, 2018; Lopes 2020). They have criticised EU development policy for continuously ignoring or even sustaining power asymmetries, and for still drawing much of its self-understanding from the post-colonial donor–recipient relationship (Hurt 2020: 152-4; Lopes 2020; Pharatlhatlhe & Vanheukelom 2019).

Critics have also raised concerns that the EU maintains extremely complex and overlapping partnerships on the African continent, which are thought to fragment decision-making and even undermine Africa's regional integration plans (Lopes 2020). To illustrate, the EU's main interlocutor for its partnership with 'Africa' is the AU, which is the pre-eminent multilateral

1 See Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0947

organisation on the continent, the proponent of the ambitious Agenda 2063, and the architect of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). It also partners with AROS in the form of the AU's eight mandated regional economic communities (RECs), which have diverse multisectoral regional integration and peace and security programmes. Most of these work on a strictly intergovernmental basis. The EU also maintains bilateral agreements with African countries belonging to these AROs, through which it extends bilateral aid and engages in more robust political dialogue. Conventional conditionality requirements mark these relationships, often compelling partner states to emulate EU preferences in lieu of implementing their own policies or regionally agreed priorities (Bercowitz et al 2017).

Hence, there are possible 'winners' and 'losers' in the EU's revamped policies and financial arrangements with individual countries and regional organisations – or, at the very least, some parties benefit more than others. Hurt (2020: 152-4) uses the EU's Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with African states and regional organisations as an example of who may lose out. He argues that bilateral agreements and development cooperation are negotiated in contexts of a power differential where commercial opportunities for EU companies are disproportionately promoted. To him, these conditions limit African countries' policy space in negotiations, thereby locking them into a neo-colonial relationship with Europe' (Hurt 2020: 154). Staegar has also referred to this imbalance in negotiation contexts, describing it as situations where 'unequal partners must walk a fine line between mutually beneficial cooperation and coercion' (Staegar 2023 :1).

Debates about power asymmetries between Europe and Africa and the continuous reproduction of similar agreements lend credence to the notion that the EU's key accords either undervalue or ignore African concerns and interests. It is for this reason that the SADC Secretariat's efforts to develop a common position among its member states about the successor to the Cotonou Agreement and the NDICI mechanism must be understood. In this paper, I will address three questions. First, how did SADC develop its position on the NDICI, and how did it relate to the Post-Cotonou negotiations? Second, what are SADC's main reservations about the instrument and third, how valid are they?

The paper is organised into five sections. The first section outlines SADC's role in formulating its position on the NDICI. It shows how they were linked to the AU's larger efforts to prepare the ACP Group for the discussions while contending with the challenge of lacking a regional negotiating mandate. The second section discusses SADC's relationship with the EU in a historical context. The third section covers EDF financing modalities for SADC. The fourth section summarises the NDICI, and the fifth discusses SADC perspectives on the instrument and its validity. The paper is based on interviews with SADC experts and officials conducted between August 2022 and December 2023 and research on the potential consequences of the instrument found in grey literature.

2. Background to SADC's Position on the NDICI

SADC is a regional organisation comprising of 16 member states in Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean region. Its origins can be traced back to the anticolonial movement that swept the African continent in the late 1960s. It reached its apex in southern Africa in the early 1990s when majority rule was established in Namibia and South Africa. SADC has since been driven by the need to extricate the southern African region from perpetual marginalisation in the world economy and its damaging economic dependence on former colonial powers through political solidarity and improved economic cooperation among its member countries (Motsamai 2018:69). Its current mandate is to promote peace and security, economic growth, regional integration, and poverty alleviation, and to enhance the standard and quality of life of the people of Southern Africa (SADC 2015).

SADC has typical policy organs for an ARO. Its highest decision-making body is a Summit of Heads of State and Government, which meets annually. It can also convene extraordinary summit meetings to address emergencies or urgent political or security concerns. All member states are expected to adhere to decisions taken at the summit level, which are reached by consensus (SADC 2015). In between summits, SADC is governed by the Council of Ministers (COM), which meets at least four times a year and reports to the summit. It advises the summit on policy matters, the development of SADC as an institution, and the efficient functioning of the SADC Secretariat.

The COM also develops the SADC 'common agenda', outlines annual strategic priorities, and approves and oversees the implementation of SADC policies, strategies, and programmes, including external agreements (SADC 2015).

The SADC Secretariat is based in Botswana's capital of Gaborone and is headed by an executive secretary. The SADC Secretariat does not make political decisions. It carries out SADC's political directives and reports to the COM. It also supervises SADC's public administration apparatus (SADC 2015). The executive secretary oversees government consultations, SADC engagements with other RECs, and SADC's external and multilateral engagements. However, as a body that executes political directives, the Secretariat has no supranational authority. It does not have the power to act independently of its members or to enforce decisions over them because decision-making authority rests with member states.

SADC is predominantly donor-funded. To illustrate, its budget for the 2020/21 financial year was US$55,304,857, made up of US$21,646,834 in member state contributions (31% of the total) and US$33,658,023 in contributions from donors (61% of the total), which SADC refers to as International Cooperating Partners (SADC 2021a). Member state contributions are used to cover operational costs, mostly staff expenses. In contrast, donor funding is primarily allocated to programme activities (Mattheis 2019: 100). SADC and its predecessor, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference, or (SADCC) have cooperated with the EU since the early 1990s.

On average, the EU funds more than 60% of SADC's total budget, making it the organisation's most significant contributor of resources (Mattheis, 2020: 99). SADC countries are also part of the ACP group which negotiated the post-Cotonou agreements with the EU. ACP negotiators usually coordinate this process through the OACP Secretariat, which is situated in Brussels. This is a tedious and fraught process due to the sheer number of countries and interests represented in the group. The ACP Group comprises 48 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, 16 in the Caribbean, and 15 in the Pacific. These countries have diverse political and economic profiles, and trade agreements with the EU and regional Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) of varying forms and effects. While an 'African Group' is clearly defined, the Cotonou Agreement excludes five North African countries: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. They have had different agreements with the EU through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and bilateral association agreements concluded since the mid-2000s (EEAS 2021). They have historically opted to maintain their privileged status with the EU. The AU has criticised the omission of North Africa, stating that this goes contradicts the AU's objectives for continental integration embodied in Agenda 2063.

Meanwhile, the AU formally partners with the EU through the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) developed in 2007. It has been funded by the EDF, particularly the peace and security cooperation backed by the African Peace Facility (APF), which the European Peace Facility has replaced since July 2021. The AU considers itself as 'representing' the 48 ACP Group members (AU 2018a). This is because of its greater political weight and legitimacy in global governance issues compared to the OACP, which has a narrower scope and mandate. There are also practical challenges with Africa's ability to effectively defend its own interests autonomously at a continental level, via the Brussels-based ACP Committee of Ambassadors (Author interview, AU official 30 March 2023).

For this reason, the AU sought to develop what it regarded as a more effective framework for discussions of Africa's collective concerns, which the EU could acknowledge and respect (Lopes 2018). Its fundamental objective has been to ensure that Africa speaks with one voice on the various platforms of partnership with the EU, and that African countries are not exposed to incompatible measures (AU 2018a, 2018b; Lopes 2020). It also wants to ensure that future agreements between African countries and the EU do not jeopardise continental integration goals, specifically Agenda 2063 and the AfCFTA, signed by 44 African countries in 2018 (Lopes 2018).

The Cotonou Agreement was set to expire in 2020, and the EU and the ACP states began formal negotiations on a new partnership agreement in September 2018. Both sides were eager to change the parameters of the relationship, recognising that it was founded on a conventional North–South relationship that was out of step with the global development agenda (Medinilla & Bossuyt 2019: 1-2). For instance, in 2017, the EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, stated that the forthcoming negotiations provided a 'unique opportunity to shape a true partnership of equals, moving beyond traditional donor-recipient perceptions' (EC 2017).

Similarly, Carlos Lopes, whom the AU had appointed in 2018 as its High Representative to support member states in the post-Cotonou negotiations, stated that 'Africa had a historic opportunity to change its relationship with Europe' (Lopes 2018). The negotiations were viewed as an opportunity for the continent to fix some of the partnership's flaws and establish frameworks that best served its interests.

Two processes then developed in parallel. One was the adoption by the ACP governments of a negotiating mandate for the Cotonou Agreement's successor. It contained several guiding principles and called for upholding the integrity of the ACP Group in the negotiations. Second, the AU's Executive Council adopted a draft 'African Common Position for Negotiations of a New Cooperation Agreement with the EU' that agreed on a dual approach to negotiating post-2020 relations with the EU (AU 2018a). It recognised the ACP framework talks as the first negotiating track. The second track was to be encapsulated in the AU—EU continent-to-continent partnership framework that continues to bring together all AU member states (AU 2018a, b). Consequently, the draft Common African position called for 'a single framework for cooperation from Union to Union/continent to continent', independent of the ACP-EU framework (AU 2018a). It was also felt that ACP group processes did not account for the increased prominence of regional organisations (interviews, 30 March 2023). The draft ACP proposed that a new agreement should be based on 'a shared vision implemented by African citizens and aligned with the AU's Agenda 2063' (AU 2018a). It also emphasised the need to modernise political dialogue, ensure that any future agreement was based on clearly defined priorities for African development, and ensure that EU funding should support an essentially African-driven, pan-African agenda of integration and security, with RECs as key interlocutors (AU 2018a, b).

The draft Common African position was built on a process that had begun in 2017 when the AU Executive Council directed the AU's Permanent Representatives Committee to prepare an African common position for the negotiations, in collaboration with the AU Commission, relevant AU Organs, RECs, and African experts, all working closely with the African Group of Ambassadors in Brussels (AU 2018b). The AU Executive Council was unable to formalise these proposals into a concrete AU negotiating mandate, partly because some African states wanted to continue intergovernmental negotiations through the ACP Group, which guaranteed their levels of development support from the EU (Medinilla & Bossuyt 2019: 4). Western and Eastern African countries, including Senegal, Burkina Faso, Uganda and Kenya, were particularly resistant to adopting a common African position (Carbone 2018: 487), resulting in agreement at an AU extraordinary summit that the existing ACP negotiating team should continue to lead the post-Cotonou negotiations.

The Covid-19 pandemic added to the complexity of negotiations by encouraging governments to adopt more inward-looking positions. The push for a hybrid negotiating process, in which the AU might directly negotiate a continent-to-continent agreement with the EU outside of the ACP-EU framework, did not succeed. This resulted in a compromise proposal for AU mandated personnel to be authorised to oversee the negotiation of the Africa regional protocol with the EU, as a way of involving the AU in the process (Medinilla & Bossuyt 2019: 5).

Another development that oriented SADC's thinking on how future relations between the EU and AROs should be organised was the Second Mid-Year AU-REC Coordination Meeting, which took place in July 2020. At this meeting, the AU developed a Division of Labour Framework to improve coordination between itself, subsidiary entities, and RECs in respect of trade, political affairs, peace and security. The framework considers the continent's increasing geopolitical importance and the need to ensure that external engagement and partnerships with Africa are based on African commonly agreed priorities (AU 2020). The AU has stated that external partnerships should accordingly be adapted to ensure that the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity are upheld in implementing national, regional, and continental cooperation (AU 2020).

Following challenges encountered with the AU initiative and drawing inspiration from it, the SADC COM met at an extraordinary meeting in June 2021. They decided that a team of experts from SADC member states (supported by the SADC Secretariat) should be assembled to work with SADC Ambassadors in Brussels to analyse the implications of the new EU-ACP Partnership Agreement as well as the 2021–7 programming (SADC 2021: 73-4). Like the AU, SADC lacked a formal mandate to engage in direct negotiations with the EU on behalf of its member states. Instead, it tried to rally its member states behind a shared understanding of the areas that needed attention in the agreements. The specific terms of reference were to evaluate the congruity among the provisions of the Post-Cotonou Agreement, the NDICI, and global and international obligations regarding sustainable development; evaluate the conformity between the provisions of the Post-Cotonou Agreement and the NDICI with the regional and sectoral development priorities of SADC; and evaluate whether the Post-Cotonou Agreement and the NDICI incorporated measures to meet their stated commitments (SADC Secretariat 2021). As part of the process, the SADC Secretariat completed an internal evaluation of the 10th and 11th EDFs, considering the lessons learned from the 11th EDF implementation, to present proposals that would inform SADC's approach to future cooperation negotiations in the context of the EU's 2021–2027 programming cycle (SADC 2021a:74).

The SADC Executive Secretary was also tasked with working with the heads of other RECs to discuss a common understanding on the provisions of the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement and present a consolidated position at mid-year coordination meetings in October 2021 (interviews with SADC officials, 18 August 2022). Meanwhile, the EU consulted RECS on the new cycle programming in November 2020 and February 2021. However, because these consultations were not officially structured, they remained informal (interviews with SADC officials, 18 August 2022). Much of what was discussed did not make it into the final agreements (interviews with SADC experts, March 2023). Nonetheless, throughout 2021, the SADC experts presented technical and detailed reports to the COM. Meanwhile, SADC members of the ACP continued their deliberations.

In summary, two parallel procedures had developed, resembling the AU's previous endeavor to create a cohesive framework for negotiations among its member states. Since the EU-ACP negotiations were ending, time was another crucial consideration. Recognizing that the discussions would soon come to an end and that reaching a consensus would prove difficult, the SADC COM recommended that SADC nations make a political statement during the signing ceremony, bringing up some of the issues that SADC had reservations with (SADC 2021a). This did not happen (author interviews with SADC officials, 5 August 2023). Instead, the SADC Secretariat presented SADC's concerns to the European Commission via a letter in late 2021 after the agreement was signed. Since then, the EU has not substantively discussed or addressed the reservations raised by SADC. But SADC's misgivings about the new financing modalities certainly remain.

3. SADC–EU Relations in Historical Context

Mattheis (2019) accurately observes that the EU has provided the most substantial financial support to SADC, surpassing the contributions made by all other donors. He draws attention to the fact that, during certain years, the EU provided SADC with as much as 80% of its foreign assistance, which is nearly four times the amount contributed by its largest member state, namely South Africa (Mattheis 2019: 99). The EU's continuous support of SADC has also been related to its pursuit of an EPA, a trade agreement between the two regions whose negotiating process has been described as 'long and tortuous' by some SADC countries (Ioannides et al 2003: 3). The EU-SADC EPA is strategically relevant to the EU. Its financial support is partly linked to the implementation of the agreement (Mattheis 2019: 103).

This does not mean that certain agreements and EU support are detrimental to African countries. However, it does highlight the nuances in the relationship. Specifically, the EU's support must be understood in the context of its wider partnership with African countries and regional organisations, that have been shaped by post-colonial legacies of dominance and dependency (Hurt 2020; Kotsopoulos & Mattheis 2018; Haastrup et al 2021). Most EU member states were still colonial powers when the European Economic Community (EEC), the EU's predecessor, was founded in 1957. Some, like the United Kingdom, Spain, and Portugal, still had colonial territories when they joined the EEC years later. As Kotsopoulos and Mattheis argue, the first EU–Africa accords were trade agreements connecting France and Belgium's colonies to the then EEC (2018: 445). The colonial domination of EU members like Portugal, Belgium, and the UK affected the resources and institutional settings for subsequent economic development in these countries.

In the 1980s, when southern African countries were fighting for independence and decolonisation, they founded SADC's precursor, the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC), to advance their national political liberation cause. But another driving force for SADCC's creation was to mobilise development finance and create a system to coordinate aid to support these efforts (Tjønneland 2006: 1). Paradoxically, this funding came from Northern donors. The transition from SADCC to SADC was meant to change this, allowing for a stronger focus on deepening economic integration and development, as well as mobilising resources from inside the region. However, SADC struggled to wean itself off donor support due to many of its members' poor economic performance following independence. Many SADC governments relied on donor funding themselves to remain in power and provide social goods.[2] Many had developed aid-dependent economic models and became accustomed to the increased budgets that aid provided (Dunning 2004: 410). This came hand in hand with diminished respect for the sovereignty of African countries among Western governments and international institutions, which sought to transform these countries' administrative and political systems (Fraser & Whitfield 2009: 18).

Given the history of development assistance being delivered in the context of patronage and dependency, with various conditions attached, SADC attempted, from 2000 onwards, to restructure its relations with donors or international cooperation partners (ICPs). Its ICP portfolio included the EU, Nordic countries (Denmark, Norway, Finland) and Germany. The German government deserves special mention. It was the first European donor to directly support SADC's peace and security programmes. It has supported the implementation of SADC initiatives since 1985, contributing more than EUR340 million in total (Mattheis 2019: 104). China and Russia have signed MOUs with SADC but have not offered amounts anywhere near to that support. The African Development Bank (AfDB), international institutions like the World Bank, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and other UN agencies have also provided various forms of financial and technical assistance over the years.

However, influential member states like South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Angola, which broadly opposed foreign influence in the affairs of African countries, sought to reduce the organisation's reliance on Western funding. In February 2002, SADC adopted a new formula for membership contributions that was calculated on the GDP of each member. As Mattheis explains, the formula established upper and lower limits on member contributions, requiring a minimum of 5% and a maximum of 20% of their GDP (2019: 95-6). South Africa, the largest economy in the region, comprising about 70% of regional GDP, had its contribution set at the maximum rate. Angola, the second-largest economy, was to pay about 10%, and the other members between 5% and 7%, figures that are above their share of regional GDP (Mattheis 2019: 96). This membership contribution formula coincided with SADC's restructuring from 2002 onwards, which increased in its core operating costs. Despite the increase in member state contributions, they were unreliable; some members paid late. For example, in 2020 and 2021, Comoros racked up arrears to the tune of US$5,044,380, resulting in the SADC Secretariat sending its government a letter of notification of sanctions imposed on it from 1 April 2021 (SADC 2021a: 6). The point to emphasise is that, due to unreliable payments, the organisation's overall budget has been insufficient to implement its regional projects. The poor contribution-to-GDP ratio is another factor. Moreover, SADC lacks independent funding sources, such as direct taxes or special levies (Mattheis 2019: 97).

Nonetheless, SADC's post-2002 institutional arrangement resulted in most activities implemented by member countries, project management units, or regional subsidiarity organisations (Tjønneland 2006: 2). The Secretariat played a more significant role in mobilising external resources. Implementing agencies could also solicit funding, and form partnerships with external donor agencies. However, this arrangement faced resistance when donor funds were directed at political and security-related projects. SADC then structured a dialogue between itself and donors, which took place at the political, policy and, technical levels. At the highest political level was a ministerial consultative conference that met biannually. It set up a Joint ICP Task Force to regulate day-to-day operations, which bridged top-level SADC political decision-makers with donor representatives on the ground. In 2006, SADC also adopted the Windhoek Declaration, which takes a stronger position on ownership, transparency, and shared responsibility for development cooperation (SADC 2006). The Declaration was revised into the SADC ICP Partnership Statement in 2012, after a wide range of governments and organisations adopted the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation to reform traditional donor–recipient dynamics in international development cooperation (OECD 2012).

The Windhoek Declaration is modelled on the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and establishes consensus on effective regional development cooperation with all donors. It commits donors to the principles of ownership, alignment, harmonisation, management for results and mutual accountability, and the streamlining of operational procedures, rules, and other practices in delivering development assistance to SADC (SADC 2006). SADC describes each of these principles as follows: Under alignment, it cites the necessity to ensure that donors base their overall support on SADC's strategies and policies. This is reinforced by its Resource Allocation Framework which guides how donor resources should be assigned to SADC priorities (SADC 2012). According to this framework, 50% of financial resources should be allocated to industrial development, market integration and infrastructure; 15% to peace and security cooperation; and 35% to special programmes. The harmonisation

2 Foreign aid has frequently been used to influence policies and promote donor's foreign policy goals in donor-dependent countries like Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi, Lesotho, Swaziland and Madagascar.

principle compels donors to establish joint arrangements for planning, funding, and implementing funded programmes, while the management for results principle is about donors supporting SADC in improving performance management.

In 2012, the SADC Secretariat initiated another institutional reform and compliance process to meet its fiduciary obligations to the EU in particular. ICPs supported SADC through technical initiatives that followed rigorous donor-led procedures. Technical Assistants handled and monitored these initiatives, but there was typically little transfer of relevant skills and expertise. Donor pre-approval for procurement and expenditure was necessary, resulting in delays, inefficiencies, decreased impact, and restricted sustainability (SADC 2013:1). A resource mobilisation strategy has also been in place since 2012, which includes establishing a Regional Development Fund to solicit grants and concessional funding from multilateral institutions and the private sector (SADC 2012: 17). This fund has yet to be operationalized. In general, SADC's goal of financial self-reliance has been hampered by a lack of political will and urgency among its member states.

4. The Question of Ownership

Ownership is arguably the most contentious principle in development cooperation, the EU's included. The EU has in the past declared that its partnerships with Africa are to be built on on a "spirit of shared ownership, responsibility, reciprocity, respect and mutual accountability and transparency" (AU/EU2017). The EU also mentions "ownership of development priorities" in its development effectiveness principles, citing joint programming as one of the best approaches for achieving it. It has also increasingly framed 'ownership' as a multi- stakeholder issue (EC nd). Different interpretations of ownership between the EU and AROs are therefore common because divergent ideologies underlie various approaches to development cooperation.

SADC describes ownership as the control it should be able to exercise over programme design and implementation. The Windhoek Declaration states explicitly that the SADC Secretariat should exercise effective leadership over its development policies and strategies and coordinate its development actions. It goes on to state that SADC member states should take the lead in developing and implementing regional and national development strategies, while consulting with donors and other stakeholders (SADC 2006). This reasoning, which is emphasized in multiple SADC documents, places SADC at the center of the planning and implementation of regional programs. SADC practitioners also argue that, given that RECs are the AU's formal instruments for regional integration, they should rightfully plan and implement regional development programmes (Author interview with SADC officials, 10 October 2022). ICPs are expected to respect SADC's leadership and help strengthen SADC's capacity to exercise it at the regional and national levels.

Therefore, for SADC, the ownership question boils down to its role in designing donor-funded projects, and controlling how they are implemented. Nevertheless, the attainment of ownership has been considerably more intricate than these declarations of principle would suggest. Mattheis cites a study of the Windhoek Declaration which concluded that SADC's ownership was weak, measured against quite modest implementation of donor partnership commitments (Corre 2012; 6, cited in Mattheis 2019). This could be explained by the difficulties in determining what SADC as a recipient 'owns' and what is donor-driven, especially when donors are involved in planning and budgeting processes, preparing, financing, and even assisting with programme implementation by providing consultants and technical assistants. The EU has provided consultants to develop SADC regional initiatives and objectives, therefore directly contributing to staffing (Mattheis 2019: 99).

SADC emphasises that the institutions, capacities and expertise of its member states as well as its systems and procedures should be utilised throughout donor-funded programmes (interview with SADC officials, 10 October 2022). However, Mattheis contends that absorption and disbursement have previously been important issues when 'ownership' was considered, noting that 20% to 30% of funds is frequently underutilized (Mattheis 2019: 100). He also points out that the SADC Secretariat routinely uses subcontractors to accomplish projects. When they do not adhere to the procedures and timelines agreed upon by donors, funding is blocked and cannot be used (Mattheis 2019: 100). This raises concerns among donors about SADC's ownership of donor-funded initiatives, implying that capacities and ownership should not be presumed but rather practically examined (Vanheukelom 2020: 12). A more recent debate in the European development cooperation discourse has emerged over the necessity for development cooperation to not just be aligned with AROs but also to include parliaments, civil society groups, the private sector, and other stakeholders. For example, the EU regards CSOs as essential development policy implementers and legitimate governance actors (Concord, AidWatch, 2012). This multi-actor approach to ownership is critical because it decentralizes a view of ownership that is only focused on governments and RECs. However, such a strategy may result in conflicting goals among various actors. It also raises the question of how ownership should be achieved outside of governments and AROs in circumstances where civil society groups' ability to participate on their own is limited (e.g., Zimbabwe, Angola, and Mozambique).

5. SADC and the European Development Fund

The EDF has been intergovernmental in nature and has remained outside the EU budget (D'Alfonso 2014: 4), even though the EC manages most of its resources. The laws governing the EDF's financing, spending, and monitoring differ from those applicable to the EU budget (D'Alfonso 2014: 12). One distinction is that the European Parliament has played a smaller role in the operation of the EDF than other development cooperation instruments funded from the EU budget. This had raised concerns about its democratic legitimacy among some EU members which supported the idea that it should be included in the EU's general budget and financed like other EU expenditure.

As previously stated, the EDF has now been integrated into the NDICI. To give context to SADC's reservations with the NDICI, this section focuses on the two preceding EDF cycles to highlight how they granted SADC varied authority and supervision over EU-funded projects. The first is the 10th EDF (2008-13), during which the EU paid €116 million to regional integration initiatives. The second is the 11th EDF (2014-20), which provided €90 million and €56.5 million from the subregional and cross-regional envelopes. EDF financial assistance had two key characteristics. First, financial resources were allocated directly to SADC, and disbursements were predetermined, ensuring that SADC received predictable financing.

The 10th EDF was predominantly executed via direct management, with the EU assuming centralisation of programme and financial supervision. Furthermore, SADC served as a crucial interlocutor in initiatives funded by the EU via its Regional Authorising Officer, who greatly influenced the management of the EDF. Both the 10th and 11th EDF recognised the legal status of Regional Authorising Officers and National Authorising Officers, who were meant to promote effective ownership of national and regional programmes. [3]

However, the 11th EDF introduced a new geographical configuration in the form of the Eastern Africa–Southern Africa–Indian Ocean (EA-IO-SA) regions. The respective RECs were combined into one Regional Indicative Programme, allocating funds to SADC under a subregional envelope (SADC Secretariat 2021). Theoretically, to assure ownership of regional programmes, RECs were given primary roles in the conception and formulation of programmes. They were meant to coordinate and implement them as well. The financial resources under the RIP were divided into four envelopes: €385 million for the subregional envelope; €588 million for the infrastructure envelope; €507 million for the cross-regional envelope; and €10 million for the technical cooperation facility, as illustrated in Table 1 (EU 2016).

3 The role of the RAO is defined by the Implementation and Management Procedures in the revised Cotonou Partnership Agreement 2005 (Article 35 of Annex IV). Given its important functions, technical roles, and overall coordination and management responsibility, the RAO is supported by a team of technical experts.

RIP Envelope	Beneficiary & Amount	Direct support to SADC	Implementation modalities
Subregional Envelope	COMESA: €85 million EAC: €85 million IGAD: €80 million IOC: €45 million SADC: €90 million	Euro 90 million (i) Peace, security and regional stability (€15 million); (ii) Regional economic integration (€47 million); (iii) Regional natural resource management (€9 million); (iv) Institutional Capacity Building (€19 million).	Explicit role of Regional authorising officers, located at the SADC Secretariat
Infrastructure Envelope	€588 million (Regional Pool)	€20.18 million	Centrally managed by the EU
Cross-Regional Envelope	€507 million (Regional Pool)	€6 million	Centrally managed by the EU
Technical Cooperation Facility	€10 million (Regional Pool)	€3.625 million	Centralised and decentralised management

Table 1. Division of financial resources under the EA-IO-SA Regional Indicative Programme

In addition to the EDF, SADC and the EU also cooperated through the instruments listed in Table 2.

Other EU cooperation Instruments	SADC Allocation	Interventions Areas
Intra-ACP Strategy Paper and Indicative Programme (2014-2020)	Euro 16 million	Climate Change
African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) Programme	Euro 3.5 million	Peace and Security
EU Foreign Policy Instrument	Euro 0.906 million	SADC Preventative Mission in the Kingdom of Lesotho (SAPMIL)

Table 2. Other SADC-EU cooperation instruments

While the intended level of ‘ownership’ seemed substantial, it was weakened by several difficulties that the SADC Council of Ministers highlighted in internal evaluations of the 10th and 11th EDF (SADC 2021a: 74–80). One such difficulty was the EU requirement that the RIPs be synchronised within a unified EA-IO-SA framework. In practice, this entailed coordinating efforts among the three RECs – COMESA, SADC and the EAC. This initially posed a challenge, at times leading to the EU assuming control of the RIP’s overall administration (interview with SADC officials, 30 March 2023).

But it was later remedied when the arrangement gained a coordination structure called the High-Level Group (HLG), which facilitated joint decision-making between the EU and AROs in the programming and implementation of the EA-SA-IO 11th EDF RIP. Another challenge was the EU's discretion in identifying and selecting the international organisations meant to implement the RIP in accordance with a 'direct access principle'. This meant that RECs had limited influence over the selection of the implementors and could also not exercise financial oversight over these arrangements (interviews with SADC officials, 10 October 2022).

6. The NDICI

The NDICI was adopted in June 2021 by EU countries as a Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-7, phasing out the EDF (EC 2021). It is a 79.5 billion Euro instrument, of which 29 billion Euro is earmarked for Sub-Saharan Africa (EC 2021). The NDICI absorbs most of the EU's previous independent instruments, such as the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI), and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Exceptional financial instruments that will be operated outside the NDICI will include Humanitarian Aid, Pre-Accession Assistance, and the Common Foreign and Security Policy Budget (European Parliament 2021: 3). The expenditure and operationalisation of the NDICI will be subjected to European Parliament oversight. This, according to the EU, will enhance democratic ownership over development cooperation and give it flexibility and simplicity in administering development aid.

Table 3 illustrates the proposed total allocations of the instrument. They are as follows:

NDICI-GLOBAL EUROPE PILLARS	ALLOCATION (€)	PERCENTAGE ALLOCATION OUT OF TOTAL NDICI BUDGET
a) Geographic programmes:		76%
— Neighbourhood	19.323 Billion	
— Sub-Saharan Africa	29.181 Billion	
— Asia & the Pacific (Pacific Members of OACPS at least EUR 500 million of the allocation)	8.489 Billion	
— Americas & the Caribbean (Caribbean Members of OACPS at least EUR 800 million of the allocation)	3.395 Billion	
Total for geographic programmes	60.4 Billion	
(b) Thematic programmes:		8%
— Human Rights and Democracy	1.362 Billion	
— Civil Society Organisations	1.362 Billion	
— Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention	908 Million	
— Global Challenges	2.726 Billion	
Total for thematic programmes	6.3 Billion	
(c) Rapid response actions (not to be programmed) — Peace, stability and prevention in situations of emerging crisis, crisis, post crisis — Strengthening resilience and linking humanitarian aid and development action and where relevant, peacebuilding — EU foreign policy needs and priorities	3.2 Billion	4%
(d) Emerging challenges and priorities cushion Shall increase the amounts referred to in points (a), (b) and (c) in accordance with Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament establishing NDICI-Global Europe.	9.5 Billion	12%
Total NDICI-Global Europe Allocation	79.5 Billion	100%

Table 3. Overall Allocation of NDICI-Global Europe

- €60.38 billion for geographic programmes, including at least €19.32 billion for the Neighbourhood component. The remainder is allocated to sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Americas, and the Caribbean. Programmes funded under this component will promote the rule of law, human rights, democracy, good governance, peace, security, and sustainable development, and managing inequality, climate change, migration, and employment.
- €6.358 billion for thematic programmes (Human Rights and Democracy; Civil Society Organisations; Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention; and Global Challenges).
- €3.182 billion for a rapid response mechanism that will allow the EU to respond rapidly to crises; contribute to peace, stability and conflict prevention; strengthen the resilience of states, societies, communities and individuals; and link humanitarian aid and development activities. This component does not require long-term programmes but focuses on financing individual measures or one-off action plans. According to the EU, it allows it to respond to immediate crises more rapidly.
- €9.53 billion as a 'cushion' of unallocated funds to top up any of the programmes mentioned above as well as the rapid response mechanism, in case of unforeseen circumstances, new needs, emerging challenges or new priorities.

7. The New Changes

The NDICI is an elaborate instrument. This section only covers changes to the new financing arrangements, regional configuration, and policy and governance structures. First, as regards the financing framework, payments to the various RECS are no longer predefined. This means that EU support for SADC will no longer be guaranteed or predictable. Second, three separate Regional Protocols for the African, Caribbean and Pacific States are introduced, which are supposed to extend diagnostic cooperation that can directly address specific development challenges relevant to the three regions. For the NDICI, the regional arrangement has altered from an EA-SA-IO framework with three RECS to a sub-Saharan area with nine RECs.[4] Some of them are not even RECs. This is a considerably larger geographical configuration than was the case under the EDF. This means that SADC will need to interact with four other RECs and groupings, notably CEMAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS and UEMOA, while implementing EU development cooperation.

The overall governance structure has also changed. RECs no longer seem to have lead roles in implementing projects, because regional and national authorising officers have been phased out. Instead, the EU will identify specific entities – including international organisations and UN agencies – to implement regional programmes. Article 89 of the NDICI institutionalises the Group of Ambassadors (based in Brussels) as an entity in the decision-making structures of the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement. This does not seem to adequately consider the centrality of RECs in decision-making.

8. SADC Perspectives on the NDICI, and their Validity

The NDICI is the primary tool for implementing regional cooperation in the post-Cotonou regime. SADC has welcomed some of the changes, such as creating three distinct regional protocols for the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific regions. It believes this will help to identify strategic priorities tailored to each region's unique development imperatives. SADC also welcomes the fact that, compared to the previous Multi-annual Financing Framework, the budgetary allocation for the sub-Saharan Africa area has increased by 12.3% for 2021–7 (SADC 2022b). SADC will benefit from allocations from the sub-Saharan Africa envelope, which totals €29.181 billion. SADC also affirms that the strategic priorities outlined in the Multi-annual Indicative Programme for Sub-Sahara Africa (MIP SSA) correspond with its principal regional integration frameworks, the RISDP 2020-2030 and SADC Vision 2050 (SADC 2021a: 75). Nonetheless, the transition to the NDICI has caused uncertainty for the organisation, primarily in respect of financing and programming. Most SADC's positions on the NDICI are principled. Seven of its reservations consolidated from SADC's internal documents are discussed below.[5]

4 They are the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC); the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); the East African Community (EAC)l the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); the IOC Sub-Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States (IOC); SADC; and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA).

5 These include the Record of the SADC Council of Ministers Meeting, 9-18 August 2021, Lilongwe, Malawi SADC/CM/3/2021/2; SADC Secretariat 2021a. Areas that require attention in the initialled Post-Cotonou Partnership Agreement and the Neighbourhood Development and international Cooperation Instrument, and

Reservation 1: 'Threatened continental, development and integration agenda'

The regional configurations of the NDICI Implementation Pillars – most notably, the exclusion of RECs from signing RIPs – are thought to usurp the AU's and RECs authority in guiding continental and regional development and transferring it to the EU. The proposed structure is perceived to potentially reduce the value of working within regional and continental frameworks for AU and SADC member states, undermining their roles in coordinating, implementing, and monitoring regional integration. SADC recommends that programming frameworks reflect the RECs' coordinating and convening roles and be aligned to broader continental development frameworks.

Validity: The RECs are indeed the building blocks of African regional integration. SADC's position that policies should not contradict continental frameworks and initiatives is understandable. As a REC, it oversees the regional programming of EU-funded activities and ensures that they are consistent with broader continental development frameworks. SADC also confronts the problem of ensuring that its member states consistently implement its initiatives. The declining role of RECs may impair member states' commitment to execute regional projects at the national level.

Reservation 2: 'Lack of an explicit role for RECs in coordinating and implementing regional programmes'

SADC has pointed out that Article 5(1) of the post-Cotonou Agreement recognises the role of subregional, regional, continental and intercontinental organisations in achieving the objectives of the Agreement, the NDICI, and those of the three regional protocols. Yet, RECs are not assigned lead roles in programming and implementing regional cooperation. To SADC, this is out of step with the EU's development cooperation philosophy that regional integration be implemented in accordance with ownership, additionality, and subsidiarity principles. With no clear role for RECs in regional cooperation, SADC fears that the geographic structure formed in the MIP SSA may lead to the fragmentation of RECs and undermine their efforts to advance continental and regional integration.

Validity: This is a valid concern as it constitutes a major shift away from the EDF. The EDF recognised RECs as lead coordinators and implementers of regional programmes through the Regional Authorising Officers.

Reservation 3: 'Lack of a joint EU-REC coordination mechanism'

During the 11th EDF, programming coordination among the three RECs proved to be difficult, and this was ultimately accomplished through the formation of the High-Level Group. SADC is concerned that the lack of a coordinating framework or structure that stipulates how RECs will interact with the EU during the programming and programme implementation stages will hinder its ability to participate in decision-making processes.

Validity: This is a legitimate point. There is currently no joint EU-REC coordinating framework in existence, with decision-making and/or oversight responsibilities at both the program and political levels. Such a mechanism would be needed to oversee discussions and decision-making processes during the MIP SSA's planning and execution.

Reservation 4: 'Breach of the ownership principle by assigning implementation to third parties'

Previous EU–REC programming consultations were cited, with EU officials stating that RECs would not be given major roles in implementing the 2021–2027 MIP SSA. Instead, third parties such as international organisations and UN agencies would oversee implementing regional development projects. For SADC, this violates the ownership principle, since it loses control over the implementation of some of its development programmes. SADC believes that the fundamental mandate for regional integration lies with itself rather than outside parties. The fact that the organisation will not receive direct funding under the new

proposed ways of addressing them. SADC/EO-CM/2/2021/2; and SADC n.d.: 'Financing of the new Agreement.'

arrangement adds to this concern. It believes it makes it easier for foreign organisations to work around RECs when executing projects that fall under their normal jurisdiction.

Validity: While this is a genuine issue, it is doubtful that such a big change would be implemented without adequate engagement with SADC. On the contrary, SADC recommends that local and regional organisations play a stronger role in implementing EU funded projects. Where the involvement of international organisations is justified, it recommends that a clear framework of partnership with local and regional organisations be established to allow skills and knowledge transfer.

Reservation 5: ‘Implementation of Human Rights, Democracy and Civil Society programmes bypassing SADC’

Reference was made to Article 12 (2e) of the NDICI, which stipulates that the ‘Human Rights and Democracy and the Civil Society Organisations thematic programmes … shall provide assistance independently of the consent of governments and other public authorities of the third countries concerned’. This suggests that the post-Cotonou Agreement and the NDICI do not recognise or commit to engaging civil society within established national and regional structures. This issue was flagged as a sharp contrast with Article 5 of the Agreement, which stipulates that ‘Parties shall set up mechanisms for open and transparent consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including local authorities, representatives of civil society and the private sector’.

Validity: SADC rightfully wants the EU to engage civil society and the private sector ‘within established national and regional structures’, in order not to sidestep national governments and the regional organisation. This is a delicate matter for SADC. On one hand, donor support for CSOs in some SADC countries is historically contentious, with some viewed as adversaries. On the other hand, SADC efforts to develop a framework for including non-state organisations and civil society in its work programme have been sluggish and were put on hold in 2018.

Reservation 6: ‘Financial uncertainty due to a lack of predefined allocations’

There are two related issues about the lack of predefined financial allocations to RECs. The first is that the EU’s discretion over budget allocations may lead to an unequal distribution of resources. The argument put forward is that the EU would most likely prioritise its policies, ‘which may benefit some geographical areas more than others’ (SADC 2021a:79). The second concern is financial uncertainty resulting from a lack of direct resource allocation to RECs. Unlike the EDF, the nine RECs in question do not have a set financial resource allocation under the NDICI’s MIP SSA. Without established allocations, budgeting for some projects will be difficult for SADC. There is also concern regarding the financial viability of EDF-funded projects when they are transferred to the NDICI, which could impede their completion (interview with SADC officials, October 5, 2022).

Validity: Both concerns are valid. While SADC coordinates its budget annually, regional cooperation agreements are usually multi-annual and long-term in nature. Uncommitted EDF project resources may also be lost when the EDF is terminated, because the EDF and NDICI may not coexist for a long period. This may have an impact on existing projects. On the other hand, the financial uncertainty brought about by the changes provides a significant incentive for SADC to marshal its own resources and operationalize its Regional Development Fund.

Reservation 7: ‘Political interference in future development cooperation’

There are concerns that assigning parliamentary oversight and control of the NDICI may introduce political interference and meddling in the implementation of regional cooperation. The EDF experienced minimal political interference; a level of assurance that cannot be ensured under the NDICI regime. Concerns are that future development cooperation may be driven by political conditionality, forcing SADC to comply with certain political conditions that may have negative or intrusive consequences on the affairs of member states.

Validity: This is a legitimate concern. The previous Cotonou Agreement anticipated a mechanism of bilateral consultations and the suspension of aid in case of breaches of the 'essential elements' – human rights, democratic norms and the rule of law – as well as 'serious cases of corruption' (Berkowitz et al 2017: 12). With the NDICI, the EU intends to increase democratic oversight over its funding tools. It will most likely ensure that its modalities and instruments are strictly consistent with its core ideals and principles. This may mean enforcing certain criteria or connecting EU financing to specific standards that SADC nations must comply with. SADC contend that as a development cooperation instrument, this approach violates ownership principles because successful reform programs cannot be imposed from the outside.

9. Conclusion

The post-Cotonou Agreement and the NDICI represent key milestones in the EU's relations with African countries and AROs, including SADC. The EU is working to modernise its development policy and improve its relations with third nations. It is also focusing more on the concept of 'equal partnership' to overcome the typical donor-recipient dynamic in its numerous dealings with third countries. However, African regional organisations like SADC have been overlooked in direct negotiations with the EU concerning its new development cooperation financial arrangements. The fact that the post-Cotonou negotiations combined bilateral and regional partnership arrangements did not help. Neither did the lack of a negotiating mandate on the part of SADC to represent its member states' collective interests and contribute officially to deliberations over the NDICI. The power balance between the EU and SADC countries is likewise completely unequal, with the EU's priorities and preferences dominating final agreements. These disparities do not augur well for alleged aspiration for change, nor do they reflect a shift intact in how the EU promotes 'equal partnerships' in its development cooperation relations with AROs.

While the issue of asymmetry is evident, SADC has chosen a more principled approach to highlight its reservations with the NDICI. It has relied on the EU's development narrative and ideology to make its point, ignoring the politics and anti-colonial arguments that are more common in scholarly accounts of EU-Africa relations. SADC's objections are primarily concerned with the EU's adherence to the ideals outlined in the Paris Declaration. It places a high premium on ownership because the proposed programming measures directly affect how ownership is exercised. This is a crucial and potentially contentious issue for future EU-SADC development cooperation, illustrating the importance of addressing varying interpretations of the concept.

The EU's conception of ownership has become more open and diversified in terms of the actors participating. SADC's understanding is somewhat constrained in that it regards the organisation as the key, and frequently sole, stakeholder in the design, implementation, and evaluation of EU-funded activities. It is of the position that its core duty of carrying out projects at the regional level would be circumvented if they had the effect of assigning primary implementation tasks to foreign organisations and UN agencies. It would also negatively impact the growth and development of local organisations. This raises important questions on how SADC and the EU view and understand ownership, as well as whether it should be led by EU preferences and interests or SADC-specific requirements and contextual settings. Ultimately ownership should be relational and assessed from both perspectives in order to specify the relevance and utility of arrangements to the AROs receiveing EU support.

Linkages between political performance and aid allocations are also nothing new at the bilateral level. The EU has applied political conditionalities in its agreements with third countries since the mid 1990s. But the introduction of conditionalities into future development cooperation would be a stark depature from the EDF and can potentially politicise the EU-SADC partnership. This is why the EU should provide opportunities for frank and transparent engagement on these issues to promote trust and ensure that funding arrangements in the post-Cotonou regime are complementary to SADC priorities and preferences.

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